

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 IO-10 /105 W
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R 170700Z JUL 75
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5968
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8136

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINT MOPS ECON ELAB EIND EINV EFIN VS
SUBJ: SAIGON, CITY WITHOUT JOY

SUMMARY : SAIGON IS A DRAB PLACE TODAY. UNEMPLOYMENT IS CHRONIC, PEOPLE ARE BEING FORCED INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND CORRUPTION STILL PREVAILS AMONG PUBLIC OFFICIALS. THERE WERE THE IMPRESSIONS OF AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD VIETNAMESE GIRL WITH FRENCH NATIONALITY WHO DEPARTED SAIGON ON JULY 1. THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF THE PRG'S NEW CAPITOL WAS RELATED TO A CONGEN OFFICER DURING THE GIRL'S VISIT TO HONG KONG. END SUMMARY

1. SAIGON IS A SAD PLACE TO LIVE. MOST OF THE TRAFFIC IS GONE AND SO IS THE LIFE OF THE CITY. WOMEN ARE PROHIBITED FROM WEARING WESTERN STYLE CLOTHING AND EVEN THE TRADITIONAL AO DAI IS BANNED EXCEPT FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN. THERE IS PLENTY OF FOOD IN THE MARKET PLACE BUT THEY ARE MANY UNEMPLOYED WITHOUT MONEY TO BUY THE FOOD. THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS FORCED MANY RESIDENTS TO DEPART THE CITY AND WORK THE RICE FIELDS IN THE
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COUNTRYSIDE. THE JOBLESS(ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO FORMERLY

WORKED FOR AMERICANS) ARE THE PRIME TARGETS FOR REMOVAL TO THE PROVINCES. IN THE HOPES OF AVOIDING BEING SHIPPED OUT, MANY SAIGONESE HAVE RESORTED TO ERECTING SMALL RESTAURANTS OR STANDS SELLING A FEW ITEMS THEREBY ESTABLISHING THEIR "BUSINESS" IN THE CITY. A FEW BARS REMAIN OPEN BUT THESE ARE FREQUENTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY CADRE OF THE LIBERATION ARMY.

2. INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED OF STREET PEDDLERS AND PEDICAB DRIVERS COMPLAINTING TO THE PRG TROOPS FOR HAVING RUINED THE ECONOMY. ONE PEDICAB DRIVER REPORTEDLY LAMENTED THAT PRIOR TO "LIBERATION" THEY COULD MAKE \$VN 1000 A DAY BUT NOW THEY ARE LUCKY IF THEY MAKE \$VN 300 THOUGH PRICES HAVE REMAINED THE SAME.

3. THE SOVIET FLAG NOW FLIES OVER THE FORMER U.S. EMBASSY AND RUSSIANS ARE A COMMON SIGHT IN THE CITY. THE PRC OCCUPIES THE FORMER TAIWAN EMBASSY AND USAID -I IS THE DISTRICT HEAD-QUARTERS FOR PRG SECURITY. MOST FORMER AMERICAN QUARTERS ARE OCCUPIED BY THE LIBERATION ARMY. FOREIGN BUSINESS SUCH AS THE FRENCH SOFT DRINK AND BEER FIRM, BGI, ARE STILL CONTROLLED BY THEIR OWNERS BUT CADRE WERE BEING ASSIGNED TO STUDY TO MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS.

4. SAIGON TELEVISION GENERALLY BROADCASTS FROM 1900-2100 HOURS CARRYING GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA AND CULTURAL FILMS. TWO WELL KNOWN VIETNAMESE ACTRESSES, THAN THUY HANG AND KIM CUONG HAVE APPEARED ON TV AS VC CADRE. HANG, THE WIFE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN NGOC OANH, WAS INTRODUCED AS A FULL COLONEL WHO HAS SERVED THE REVOLUTION FOR TWENTY YEARS.

5. CORRUPTION IS STILL COMMON. ALTHOUGH THE BANKS ARE CLOSED, ACCOUNT HOLDERS COULD WITHDRAW AS MUCH AS THEY WISHED AS LONG AS THEY SPLIT WITH THE CADRE. GASOLINE WAS RARE BUT COULD BE OBTAINED FROM THE CADRE FOR A PRICE. BLACK-MARKET CURRENCY OPERATIONS CONTINUED AND PIASTERS WERE SELLING AT \$VN 1500 TO THE US DOLLAR. THE PRICE FOR A VIETNAMESE TO GET OUT OF VIET NAM WAS \$VN 10 MILLION.

6. THERE ARE CONTINUED REPORTS OF RESISTANCE BY ARVN SOLDIERS AND MILITARY INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED AS CLOSE AS
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GO VAP ON SAIGON'S OUTSKIRTS.

7. PEOPLE ARE PERMITTED TO TRAVEL FREELY WITHIN SAIGON BUT PERMISSION IS REQUIRED TO TRAVEL TO OTHER TOWNS AND THE TRAVELERS MUST INDICATE WHEN HE EXPECTS TO RETURN. MALES REQUESTING PERMISSION TO TRAVEL ARE ESPECIALLY SCRUTINIZED. GROUPS OF FAMILIES HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED TOGETHER AS A PART OF THE SECURITY CONTROLS. INDIVIDUALS ARE ASSIGNED TO GROUPS ACCORDING TO AGE

AND ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND INDOCTRINATION COURSES.

8. PERSONS GIVEN PERMISSION TO DEPART THE COUNTRY ARE PROHIBITED FROM TAKING OUT MORE THAN \$500 IN US DOLLARS. ANYTHING EXCEEDING \$500 IS TAKEN AND A RECEIPT IS ISSUED PROMISING EVENTUAL RETURN. ALL PERSONS INCLUDING DIPLOMATS ARE GIVEN A THROUGH BODY SEARCH BEFORE DEPARTURE.

9. THERE HAVE BEEN NO MASS PUBLIC EXECUTIONS IN SAIGON. THERE IS HOWEVER, CONSIDERABLE CONCERN OVER PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN SENT OFF FOR "RE-EDUCATION" AND HAVE NOT YET RETURNED. LOOTERS HAVE BEEN EXECUTED ON THE SPOT. THE SOURCE WAS AWARE OF ONE ARMY MEDICAL OFFICER WHO WAS EXECUTED IN FRONT OF HER HOME FOR NOT HAVING REPORTED FOR RE-EDUCATION THE PREVIOUS DAY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975HONGK08136
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750247-0193
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750747/aaaabqgr.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAIGON, CITY WITHOUT JOY SUMMARY : SAIGON IS A DRAB PLACE TODAY. UNEMPLOYMENT IS CHRONIC
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, ECON, ELAB, EIND, EINV, EFIN, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006